

VZCZCXYZ0019  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHMN #0648/01 3161833  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 121832Z NOV 09  
FM AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0028  
INFO MERCOSUR COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS MONTEVIDEO 000648

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [UY](#)  
SUBJECT: URUGUAY: ELECTION RESULTS SHOW INTERNAL PARTY SHIFTS

¶1. (U) Summary. Uruguay's October 2009 presidential and legislative elections represented a historic change for all three major national political parties in regards to their internal dynamics. Within the incumbent Frente Amplio (FA) coalition, the elections reinforced the predominance of leading presidential candidate Jose Mujica's Movement for Popular Participation (MPP), which achieved notable gains in Parliament in addition to its candidate's strong position in the presidential race. In the National Party (Blancos), October's legislative elections demonstrated the resurgence of Luis Alberto Lacalle's sector Unidad Nacional at the expense of running mate Jorge Larrañaga's Alianza Nacional, while gains by Pedro Bordaberry's Vamos Uruguay faction ushered in a new era of leadership in the Colorado Party. End Summary.

Elections Reinforce Mujica's Predominance in Frente Amplio Coalition

-----  
¶2. (U) With its retention of a parliamentary majority and a presidential candidate well-positioned for victory in November, the Frente Amplio remains the predominant force in Uruguayan politics. However, in the past five years, public support for the FA has diminished slightly, with Mujica unable to win the outright October victory that Tabare Vazquez was able to claim in 2004. In addition, shifts in the FA's internal power structure have favored more radical parties within the coalition, particularly the MPP, which was founded by former Tupamaro guerrillas (including Mujica) in 1985 and is currently the largest party within the Frente Amplio.

¶3. (U) The growing predominance of the MPP was indicated by Mujica's victory over former Finance Minister Danilo Astori in June's internal elections. (Astori was named Mujica's running mate shortly after the internal elections.) This advantage was further reinforced by October's parliamentary elections, in which Mujica's Espacio 609 list (which includes the MPP and is now led by Mujica's wife Senator Lucia Topolansky) demonstrated considerable gains within the coalition relative to previous contests.

¶4. (U) Prior to 2009, parliamentary elections favored more moderate parties within the FA, including the Socialist Party, Astori's Asamblea Uruguay faction, and the Vertiente Artiguista, Alianza Progresista, and Nuevo Espacio factions. The 2004 elections gave the advantage to these moderate parties in both houses, as they claimed a three seat (10 seats to seven) margin over Espacio 609 plus the radical Communist and CAP-Libertad parties in the Senate and a four seat (28 to 24) advantage in the Congress of Deputies. This balance changed dramatically in October 2009, as these radical parties gained a 10 seat (30 to 20) lead in the Congress, while the two groups reached parity (eight to eight) in the Senate.

## Lacalle Gains, Larranaga Loses in National Party

---

¶5. (U) Similar to the Frente Amplio, the National Party also experienced internal power shifts that favored the faction of its presidential candidate, Luis Alberto Lacalle, while taking away support from its vice presidential candidate, Jorge Larranaga. This gain can be primarily attributed to the 2008 creation of Unidad Nacional, a Lacalle-led coalition that fused Lacalle's Herrerismo faction with Francisco Gallinal's Correntada Wilsonista faction.

¶6. (U) The results of the 2009 elections demonstrated the crucial role Gallinal's support played in Lacalle's struggle for control over the party. Whereas Larranaga's Alianza Nacional group held a 6-3 advantage over Herrerismo in the Senate and a 23-6 margin over Herrerismo in the Congress after the 2004 elections, the 2009 elections gave Unidad Nacional a 5-4 advantage over Alianza Nacional in the Senate and a 19-10 lead in the Congress, with former Correntada Wilsonista legislators representing much of the difference.

## Bordaberry Cements Control over Colorados

---

¶7. (U) Perhaps the most dramatic transformation has occurred within the Colorado Party. Former Uruguayan presidents Julio Maria Sanguinetti and Jorge Batlle handed over the reins to Pedro Bordaberry, leading to a rejuvenation of the party in October's elections, with an 80 percent increase on its 2004 vote totals. This generational changing of the guard has been accompanied by a drastic shift in the Colorado Party's internal structure, as Bordaberry's Vamos Uruguay faction, despite having only been founded last year, has achieved dominance over the party. In October, Vamos Uruguay won 14 of 17 Colorado seats in Congress and 3 of the party's 5 Senate seats; the Colorados' remaining seats went to Jose Gerardo Amarin Batlle's Propuesta Batllista.

## Comment

---

¶8. (SBU) These shifts in internal party dynamics can already be seen as having an impact on the distribution of public support among the three parties, as reflected in the results of October's elections. While the FA and the National Party remain the two leading forces in Uruguayan politics, they are drifting from the center, as the FA turns leftward with the growth of the MPP, and the Blancos move to the right with the resurgence of Lacalle and the decline of the more moderate Larranaga. The Colorado Party was able to exploit this polarized environment in October by occupying the vacuum in the center of the political spectrum and by presenting Bordaberry as a candidate of the future, uninterested in the decades-old political struggles between left and right as personified by Mujica and Lacalle.

MATTHEWMAN